



Youth Inclusion Workshop Guide: Supporting LGBTQ Youth

Workshop Description: This workshop includes information for developing the skills for establishing an inclusive environment for youth, specifically LGBTQ youth. Program staff will ensure that all youth are safe and comfortable in their surroundings through being open to LGBTQ youth and responsive to their concerns.

Preparation Time: The designated preparation time for this workshop is approximately 15 to 20 minutes. This time should include reading background information on the Youth Inclusion Training website and in this workshop guide, collecting materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

Instruction Time: It will take approximately 50 minutes to 1 hour to complete all activities within this guide.

Materials:

- Printed copies of the *LGBTQ Pronoun* worksheet.
- Printed copies of the *Issues of LGBTQ Youth* activity handout.
- Pens and markers.
- Three large sheets of white paper and/or whiteboard space.

Preparation Instructions: You should read the content related to this topic on the Youth Inclusion Training website, specifically the content related to Supportive Adult-Youth Relationships. In addition, you should review the background information in this workshop guide and any others related to this topic (e.g., Relational Strategies, Developmental Levels and Inclusion, etc.). In addition, gather all necessary materials and familiarize yourself with the workshop guide.

Knowledge: Understanding Strategies for Supporting LGBTQ Youth

For supportive adult-youth relationships to be effective in helping to facilitate an inclusive environment, the relationships need to be supportive of all youth. Many different sub-groups of youth exist, and all face unique challenges. One of these groups, LGBTQ youth, are particularly susceptible to discrimination. LGBTQ youth feel less safe in a variety of environments and are more likely to have been bullied or harassed than non-LGBTQ youth.^{11, 37, 49, 26} These experiences make LGBTQ youth more vulnerable to a variety of negative behavioral, physical, and mental outcomes.⁴⁹ However, environments that are welcoming of, safe for, and affirming of LGBTQ youth buffer against these potential negative outcomes.⁴⁹ With that in mind, it is important that youth programs work to actively include and protect LGBTQ youth.

Issues	Staff should be trained and aware of the issues affecting LGBTQ people in their community by reviewing local media and working with local advocacy groups. Program staff should also spend time thinking about how activity expectations may support, celebrate, ignore, or demean LGBTQ youth. ⁸
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Language	<p>Staff who work with youth should be trained in the language used about and by persons who identify as LGBTQ. Staff should understand the impact this language has on LGBTQ youth in particular. Below are topics that should be covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronouns are parts of speech that substitute a noun in a sentence. For example, a person designated male at birth (DMAB) who is transitioning may ask to be referred to by feminine pronouns (she/her/hers) instead of masculine ones (he/him/his) because feminine pronouns coincide with that person’s gender identity.⁵⁹ • Gender identity is the way an individual identifies with regard to gender; it is not necessarily connected to the sex the individual was assigned at birth.²⁴ • Gender non-conforming or transgender describes when an individual’s gender identity does not align with their biological gender or when they express their gender in a way that is not traditional.²⁴ • Transition refers to when transgender people take steps so that their outward identity matches their gender identity (e.g., dressing in different clothes, choosing a more masculine or feminine name, asking to be referred to by different pronouns).⁴² • Queer is an umbrella term used to describe someone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or a host of other identities distinct from strictly heterosexual and cisgender.²⁴ • Questioning refers to youth who are uncertain about their sexuality or gender identity.²⁴ • Gender identity and sexual orientation are different things; there is not necessarily a connection between biological sex, gender identity, and sexual attraction.⁸
Rules and Procedures	<p>Being clear about the definitions, rules, and procedures regarding bullying, harassment, and discrimination will help program staff to protect all youth, including the LGBTQ youth, in the program.^{11, 8} Program rules and procedures should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly oppose discrimination based on sexuality or gender identity⁸ • Prohibit the use of anti-LGBTQ language and actions²⁸ • Ensure the use of names and pronouns youth prefer²³



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convey the intentional aim to provide a safe place for LGBTQ youth where they can feel comfortable to be themselves⁴² • Limit or prohibit dividing youth by gender²³ <p>There are ways to create programs that directly support LGBTQ youth. Consider offering peer support groups²⁸ where LGBTQ youth can be educated about how to become resilient to society’s expectations⁴² or forming formal mentoring programs specifically for LGBTQ youth.³⁴ Staff could develop a community of peer supporters within the program where youth can learn from and advocate for each other.²³</p>
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Youth program staff need to be open to LGBTQ youth and responsive to their concerns. The first step to this end is not to make assumptions about youth (e.g., do not assume you know someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity).²⁴ Furthermore, visibly support LGBTQ youth by responding to anti-LGBTQ behavior every time it occurs. This leads to a greater sense of trust between program staff and LGBTQ youth.^{24, 38}

There is a possibility that youth will reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity to program staff. This is called “coming out.” The youth professional may be the first or only person an LGBTQ youth comes out to, so it is essential to support the youth in a sensitive, responsive, and constructive way.²⁴ In coming out to staff, youth are taking a risk and sharing a piece of themselves, and this action should be met with respect and acceptance.

When a youth comes out to youth program staff, the staff **should** offer support without making assumptions that the youth needs or wants help. Staff should listen and recognize the courage it took for the youth to come out. Above all, tell the youth they are accepted for who they are and that staff will respect the confidentiality of the disclosure.²⁴

When a youth comes out to youth program staff, staff **should not** doubt the identity the youth is claiming or tell the youth to be secretive. Above all, staff should respect the confidentiality of the statement and not disclose the information to other individuals, including the youth’s parents, other youth, or other staff in the program.²⁴

Objectives:

- Familiarize youth program staff with LGBTQ pronouns and various gender and sexual identities.
- Develop an understanding of the challenges LGBTQ youth may face.
- Understand strategies for supporting youth who reveal their sexual orientation or identity.

Introduction (5-7 minutes):

- Describe the topic of supporting LGBTQ youth including the importance of using the correct pronouns for youth’s gender identity, providing support to LGBTQ youth by opposing any and all discrimination, and creating an inclusive environment.



- What to say: “Today we are going to focus on how to be supportive of all youth in our program, but specifically LGBTQ youth, through adult-youth relationships. These youth are susceptible to discrimination and face a unique set of challenges. As youth program staff, we will work to create an inclusive environment for these youth by openly opposing any and all anti-LGBTQ behavior or statements, using proper language for a youth’s gender identity, and respecting any and all information that youth share with staff.”

Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):

- Ask the staff to share their current knowledge about the issues that affect LGBTQ youth and the current language that should be used. Ask staff to share how they would create an inclusive environment for LGBTQ youth. Record staff responses on a large sheet of paper or whiteboard.
- Ask the staff if there is anything they want to know about creating a supportive environment for LGBTQ youth. These responses can either be a topic that they want more clarification on or a topic that has not been discussed yet.

Activities:

Activity: *LGBTQ Pronouns Worksheet* (10 minutes)

- Describe the *LGBTQ Pronouns Worksheet* activity:
 - What to say: “First, we are going to familiarize ourselves with the proper definitions and pronouns for the various gender and sexual identities.”
- Lead the *LGBTQ Pronouns Worksheet* activity:
 - For this activity, hand out a copy of the *LGBTQ Pronouns* worksheet and a pen to each staff member. Have the staff fill out the worksheet individually before going over the answers as a group.
 - When going over the worksheet, go through one definition at a time and ask for a volunteer to share their answer. Be prepared to justify or explain answers if the staff have any questions.

Activity: *Issues of LGBTQ Youth* (20 minutes)

- Describe the *Issues of LGBTQ Youth* activity (**20 minutes**):
 - What to say: “LGBTQ Youth face a unique set of challenges such as discrimination and not feeling accepted or welcomed to name a few. As youth program staff, your job is to overcome those challenges to make LGBTQ youth feel welcome and comfortable. Therefore, this activity will challenge you to look at a series of challenges youth face and to pose possible solutions. It is likely that you will incorporate some of these strategies in your interactions with youth within the program.”
- Lead the *Issues of LGBTQ Youth* activity:
 - Begin the activity by dividing the staff into groups of roughly four individuals.
 - For each group, provide a copy of the Handout: *Issues of LGBTQ Youth* (in the Resources section of this Workshop Guide) that lists common LGBTQ issues. These issues will be organized into common groups, including mental health concerns, relationship differences, harassment, and discrimination.



- The sheets of paper each group receive will have one of the issue categories on it. Staff should read through their issues and discuss amongst each other how they can alleviate those issues. These solutions may be something that program staff can do, or they may be outside resources or a more qualified individual. These issues were adapted from the University of North Carolina - Charlotte Division of Student Affairs and are located in the Resources section of this workshop guide.
- Once staff are finished discussing and writing down their solutions, return to a large group format.
- Discuss the solutions staff proposed.

Activity: Supporting Coming Out Youth (15-20 minutes)

- Describe the *Supporting Coming Out Youth* activity:
 - What to say: “There may be a time when youth come out to you and reveal their sexual orientation or identity. You may be the first and only individual they have told, and your response and support will be crucial for making youth feel accepted and comfortable. That said, there are a few guidelines for how you should and should not react.”
- Lead the *Supporting Coming Out Youth* activity:
 - Divide the staff into smaller groups of three to four people.
 - Provide the groups with pieces of construction paper and pens and markers.
 - Instruct the groups to create a “Do” and “Don’t” list in terms of how to respond to youth who have just come out.
 - Come together as a large group and go around the room sharing what each of the groups put in the two columns. As the groups are sharing, create a compilation of each group’s “Do” and “Don’t” columns on a larger sheet of paper hanging at the front of the room.
 - It may be helpful to complete this activity prior to this workshop in order to better facilitate discussion. Possible responses are located in the Resources section of this workshop guide.
 - Instructor Note: When discuss slows, make sure the group includes the following responses under the respective columns.

Do:	Don't:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thank them. Recognize that the youth has done a courageous thing telling you something so vulnerable and personal. ● Listen carefully and respectfully to what the youth is saying. ● Tell youth that they are accepted for who they are. ● Respect the confidentiality of the youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make assumptions. ● Doubt the identity that the youth is claiming to be.



Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the staff's responses gathered at the start of the workshop (see Prior Knowledge activity). Ask the staff what they learned during the course of the workshop and record the information on the same paper or a new blank page if there is no room. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.
- Ask follow-up questions, such as "What part of the activity made you realize that?"

Resources:

Worksheet: *LGBTQ Pronouns*

Handout: *Issues of LGBTQ Youth*

Sources:

Footnotes in this document can be found as references within the Youth Inclusion Implementation Guide at http://reach.umn.edu/inclusion/pdf/Youth_Inclusion_Implementation_Manual.pdf

The *LGBTQ Pronouns* worksheet was adapted from:

<https://lgbtrc.usc.edu/files/2015/05/Thats-Gay.pdf>

The *Issues of LGBTQ Youth* was adapted from:

University of North Carolina Charlotte's Division of Student Affairs

<https://safezone.uncc.edu/allies/commonissues>



Youth Inclusion Worksheet: LGBTQ Pronouns Worksheet

Directions: Chances are you have used/heard some of these words before, but do you know what they really mean? Match up each term on the left with its corresponding definition on the right.

1. Gay _____
 2. Lesbian _____
 3. Bisexual _____
 4. Queer _____
 5. Questioning _____
 6. Transgender _____
 7. Cross-Dresser _____
 8. Intersex _____
 9. Genderqueer _____
- A. Describing a person whose biological sex is ambiguous.
 - B. Traditionally a derogatory term, it has been appropriated by some LGBT people to describe themselves. Some value the term for its defiance and because it can be inclusive of the entire LGBT community.
 - C. A term or period where an individual re-assesses (however privately or openly) the orientation/identity that they have either asserted for themselves or been brought up as.
 - D. The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attractions are to people of the same sex—though in contemporary context, the term is more commonly used to describe men.
 - E. People who wear the clothing and/or accoutrements that are considered by society to correspond to the “opposite sex.”
 - F. A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attractions are to other women.
 - G. A person who identifies as a gender other than “man” or “woman,” or someone who identifies as neither, both, or some combination thereof.
 - H. An individual who is physically, romantically, emotionally, and/or spiritually attracted to men and women. These people need not have had equal sexual experience with both men and women; in fact, they need not have had any sexual experience at all to identify this way.
 - I. An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.



Youth Inclusion Handout: Issues of LGBTQ Youth

Directions: Read and discuss the following issues LGBTQ youth may face and discuss how to address and alleviate these issues.

Mental Health Concerns:

- Isolation - LGBTQ individuals may feel isolated from their peers. This can be magnified if individuals do not have a support system in place.
- Low Self-Esteem - Because of the large amount of misinformation in society about LGBTQ individuals, sometimes LGBTQ individuals internalize negative myths and stereotypes. This internalization can lead to shame and a negative self-image.
- Depression - Compacting the low self-esteem with the feelings of isolation make LGBTQ individuals more likely to have issues with depression.
- Anxiety - Because the LGBTQ population can be an invisible minority, LGBTQ individuals may experience a lot of anxiety about who knows their sexual orientation or gender identity and who they can safely share that information with.

Directions: Read and discuss the following issues LGBTQ youth may face and discuss how to address and alleviate these issues.

Relationship Differences:

- Friends - An LGBTQ person's social network may ebb and flow drastically as they come out to individuals they consider friends.
- Family Problems - LGBTQ individuals often face rejection from their family unit.
- Intimate Relationships – In a given community, the LGBTQ community may be very small, and relationships can be affected by this intimacy.
- Interpersonal Violence - Same-sex couples are just as prone to interpersonal violence as heterosexual couples; however, in same-sex couples the impact of the coming out process can greatly add to a perpetrator's control and power over a victim.

Directions: Read and discuss the following issues LGBTQ youth may face and discuss how to address and alleviate these issues.

Harassment and Discrimination:

- Intimidation/Bullying - LGBTQ youth may encounter more negative attitudes, jokes, verbal taunting, or bullying because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, LGBTQ youth may be intimidated by individuals who threaten to "out" them if they don't do something.
- Harassment - LGBTQ individuals may face harassment in many different forms. They may hear verbal threats, may have their property damaged, or be harassed because of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Social Avoidance - LGBTQ individuals may be left out of other events, groups, or activities by their peers.
- Discrimination - LGBTQ individuals do not share the same protections as other minority groups in the US. While it is no longer legal to discriminate on the basis of race, skin color, ethnicity, ability, age, sex, or veteran's status, it is still legal to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity in some states.



Youth Inclusion Handout: Issues of LGBTQ Youth

- Violence - LGBTQ individuals may be targets of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition they may be targeted because they are seen as weaker or less likely to either fight back or report the crime/incident.